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Inquiry made of deans, department charmen, selected service agencies, and student organizations resulted in 18 individuals or units favoring semester system, 89 favoring quarter system, and 18 being equivocal. Compilation of relative merits of each system and suggested improvements for quarter system.

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Final Report of Sub-Committee Studying
The Semester vs. Quarter System
June 30, 1953

The sub-committee charged with studying the merits of the semester and quarter systems, appointed by the All-University Schedule Committee on June 5, 1922, now makes its report.

On January 8, 1953, the sub-committee submitted an interim report listing the practices at other institutions, alternative plans that might be adopted for both the semester and the quarter systems, and a summary of arguments pro and con. The parent committee was asked to indicate which quarter plan and which semester plan it felt most meritorious in order that terms could be precisely defined when assessing broader University opinion.

At a meeting of the All-University Schedule Committee on February 10, 1953, the sub-committee's interim report was carefully examined with discussion that injected some new factors. It was noted that students in the All-University Congress had strongly endorsed the quarter system as presently scheduled. The sub-committee expressed some preference for a semester plan beginning around September 22nd and ending around June 5th, allowing five days between semesters. However, this plan was discounted when the Schedule Committee decided that time must be allowed between semesters to permit recording of grades and scholastic committee action in the various colleges, a period estimated at around 10 days. A 10 day student vacation so soon after the Christmas holidays would have several disadvantages.

The All-University Schedule Committee directed its sub-committee to send a copy of the interim report, as well as minutes of the February 10th meeting, to the deans, department chairmen, selected service agencies and student organizations, seeking their estimate on the various factors under consideration.

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Results of the Inquiry

It should be noted that the inquiry was not a scientific sample of opinion, for the various units were not weighted according to the number of persons in each. The purpose was to gather additional information concerning strength and weaknesses of the various proposals rather than to conduct a vote on the issue.

The wide-spread response from the various units demonstrated a lively interest in the problem and it was indicated that in most cases the respondent had consulted with members of his immediate staff before writing a letter of reply. In addition to comments concerning the various proposals, most letters expressed a definite opinion on the merits of the basic issue of the semester vs. the quarter system, thus affording some assessment of faculty attitudes.

These replies are summarized below.

Scale of Opinion

I. Those strongly favoring semester system (or opposing quarter system).

II. Majority (of department personnel) favor semester system.

III. Some sentiment for semester system, but because of difficulties involved in change-over would suggest continuance of quarter system.

IV. Majority (of department personnel) favor quarter system.

V. Those strongly favoring quarter system (or strongly oppose change).

VI. Departments indicating no clear-cut support of one plan as opposed to the other, or indicating a roughly evenly divided opinion.

	Response	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
I. Institute of Agriculture							
	General Faculty				IV		
	Agricultural Biochemistry			III			
	Agricultural Economics				IV		
	Agricultural Engineering					V	
	Entomology				IV		
	School of Forestry				IV		
	Horticulture					V	
	Plant Pathology			III			
	Poultry				IV		
	School of Agriculture, St. Paul Campus					V	
	Morris					V	
	General					V	
II. College of Education							
	Industrial Education						VI
	Physical Education					V	
III. The General College							
	Dean's Report		II				
IV. Institute of Technology							
	Chemistry					V	
	Mechanical Engineering					V	
	Mines and Metallurgy				IV		
V. Science, Literature, and the Arts							
	Dean's Report		II				
	Committee on Student Scholastic Standing	I					
	Junior College Counseling Office				IV		
	Anthropology				IV		
	Botany		II				
	English		II				
	General Studies		II				
	German						VI
	Astronomy					V	
	Journalism				IV		
	Linguistics and Comparative Philology		II				
	Mathematics			III			
	Music				IV		
	Political Science		II				
	Psychology					V	
	Romance Languages	I					
	Social Work					V	
	Sociology		II				
	Speech and Theater Arts				IV		

		I	II	III	IV	V	VI
VI.	University of Minnesota Duluth Branch						
	Education and Psychology						VI
	Humanities		II				
	Science and Mathematics			III			
	Social Studies			III			
	Student Personnel Services		II				
	UMD Student Council					V	
VII.	Professional Schools (Other than those admitting freshmen)						
	School of Business Administration						VI
	School of Dentistry	I					
	U. Extension--Applied Mortuary Science						VI
	Institute of Child Welfare					V	
	Medical School					V	
	Department of Physiology			III			
	Pharmacy				IV		
VIII.	Military Department						
	Air		II				
	Army						VI
IX.	Graduate School				IV		
X.	Office of Educational Research	II					
XI.	Summer Session						VI
XII.	Dean of Students						
	Disciplinary Counseling				IV		
	Activities				IV		
	Counseling						VI
	Foreign Students						VI
	Housing			III			
	Loans and Scholarships		II				
	Religious Activities				IV		
	Speech and Hearing Clinic				IV		
	Veterans Affairs				IV		
XIII.	All-University Congress						VI
XIV.	Service Enterprises						
	General University	II					
	University Bookstores	II					
XV.	Department of Concerts and Lectures						VI

It will be noted from the above data that 18 individuals or units favored the semester system, 39 favored the quarter system and 11 were equivocal. After studying the 68 replies with their accompanying arguments the sub-committee concluded that it is not feasible to shift to the semester system at the present time.

Summary of Comments on Relative Merits

In making the replies tabulated above, the respondents ventured a number of comments concerning the respective systems. These comments parallel the arguments pro and con that were included with the sub-committee's interim report, but are nevertheless included here to provide a more precise reflection of faculty sentiment.

Suggested Advantages of the Quarter System

1. Permits greater flexibility in program planning.

2. Provides greater flexibility for those students having to withdraw during the year, and more frequent admission dates for those wishing to enter during the school year at a time other than the opening of fall quarter.

3. Avoids Christmas holiday interruption and "let-down".

4. Better adapted to certain biological courses dependent upon seasonal instruction. The local climate imposes certain limitations not encountered everywhere.

5. More convenient in the organization and presentation of field work (Forestry, General Agriculture).

6. Enables students to free themselves for spring and summer work on home farm, or other employment, with loss of one quarter rather than the full semester (Ag.). In Duluth area, enables students to attend winter quarter in slack winter employment season, then returning to jobs in spring, summer and fall (Duluth Branch). Also true for graduate students in certain plant science areas, who utilize winter quarter for graduate study (Ag.).

7. University Schools of Agriculture traditionally operate in late fall and winter. Staff tied in with college teaching, and with Graduate School. A departure from quarter system would make it difficult to secure staff for this specialized type of instruction.

8. Certain professional school courses more conveniently arranged under the quarter system than under the semester system (Chemistry).

9. The more frequent examinations demanded by the quarter system provide a more continuous motivating force for students.

10. The quarter system brings more students into contact with counseling agencies, because of frequency of evaluation.

11. The progress of the student is more quickly gauged under the quarter system. (This is useful in foreign student area, providing basis for certain remedial activities, as well as for other students.)

12. The disciplinary counseling system may be somewhat aided by quarter system, since holds on records are often used, and student is in contact with his transcript more frequently. A motivating force for counseling.

Suggested Advantages of the Semester System

1. Instructional advantage--instructor would have a more extended contact with students. Learning takes place over a longer, less interrupted period.

2. Administrative detail could be reduced under semester plan.

3. A shift in plans would entail a review of all present course offerings, resulting in weeding out of extraneous materials, or that of lesser primary significance. Certain courses would lend themselves to combination with others, reducing duplication and extended offering, and promoting efficiency.

4. Certain sequence courses, particularly those in education, would reflect more articulation and integration (Duluth Branch).

5. Students would become more "involved" in the work of a program before deciding that they "didn't like it". Possibly less jumping around under semester system. Some feeling that a ten-week quarter does not provide basis for a sound evaluation of an area.

6. Practice teaching arrangements might be more convenient under a semester plan (Ind.Ed.).

Improvements in the Quarter System

If the quarter system is to be maintained, there may be ways for operating it more effectively and the inquiry elicited a number of such proposals. The sub-committee considered each of these and is listing them below with its comments.

1. Emphasis should be placed on the development of more five credit courses, particularly at the junior college level, to meet the criticism that the quarter system compels too limited and too hasty coverage of subject matter in the course. The sub-committee believes this proposal should be seriously considered, particularly if it could be achieved by some consolidation of present offerings. There should be experimentation to determine whether an intensive five credit course is as effective as the same offering extended over a longer period of time. Psychological and pedagogical factors should be examined as well as scheduling convenience.

2. It is proposed that consideration be given to the possibility of annual registration, wherein yearly programs would be submitted with further registration restricted to any necessary changes. The sub-committee believes this arrangement may be quite feasible in some colleges if not in others, and experimentation of this kind should be tried in those colleges interested.

3. It was noted that students would benefit from an earlier termination date for the fall quarter, allowing more time for work prior to Christmas. This could be accomplished by starting classes one week earlier in September and ending the fall quarter around December 12th. However, relations with the Veterans Administration and other agencies would have to be carefully considered.

4. Some interest was expressed in a four-quarter system, with a plan of rotation of faculty service with summer session included in the scheduling of faculty time.

5. It was pointed out that graduate seminars are frequently handicapped by the three-quarter system since students hardly have time to write high quality papers in so short a period, resulting in many incompletes. The sub-committee recommends that consideration be given to scheduling graduate seminars on a semester basis where the department recommends it, and believes the arrangement would not cause serious scheduling problems.

6. It was asked by some that the Administrative Committee clarify whether the University is moving toward a five day instead of a five and one-half day week, since there seems to be considerable confusion now with respect to the scheduling of Saturday classes.

Conclusions

It is recommended that the quarter system be retained along essentially the same lines as at present.

The proposals of various respondents mentioned above are worthy of consideration and should be discussed.

Sub-Committee

Russell M. Cooper, Chairman
Alfred L. Vaughan
Keith N. McFarland
(and three students who were also consulted in drafting the report:
Douglas Steenson
Eileen Wencl
Joyce Brumbaugh